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ABSTRACT

These brochures explain briefly the importance of establishing paternity for unwed mothers. By establishing paternity and enforcing child support orders, fathers can be required to help raise their child legally and financially. The brochures consist of two separate sheets. "For Your Child's Sake...Establish Paternity" presents several questions and answers including the definition of paternity, reasons to establish paternity, the processes required to establish paternity, the benefits and results of establishing paternity, the duration of the father's legal responsibility, and visitation. "Collecting Child Support" explains the Child Support Enforcement (CSE) Program in the Office of Child Support Enforcement, which is a federal, state, and local effort to find absent parents, their employers, and assets in order to establish paternity and enforce child support orders. The latter sheet covers the functions of state and local CSE programs in locating a non-custodial parent, establishing paternity, establishing the obligation, and enforcing the child support order. A list of phone numbers of state child support enforcement offices is included. (AP)

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ED 388 378

FOR YOUR CHILD'S SAKE...ESTABLISH PATERNITY [AND] COLLECT CHILD SUPPORT

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement
Washington, D.C. 20447

January 1993
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For your child's sake...

PS 022265

...establish paternity!

What is paternity?

Paternity means fatherhood. If parents are married, the husband is considered to be the father of children born during the marriage. If parents are not married, it is important that paternity be ***legally*** established. Otherwise, the baby has no legal father.

Even though we aren't married . . .

. . . the father of my baby and I are living together.

Does this mean that my child's paternity has been legally established?

The answer is "NO." You and the father must first sign an official form which says you both agree he is the father. A judge or other official will then legally declare him the father.

Why establish paternity?

IDENTITY: All children have the right to know their mother and father.

MONEY: Frequently, children supported by only one parent are poorer than children supported by both parents. They need child support. In order to get support, paternity must be legally established.

MEDICAL: Your child needs to know if he or she has inherited any special health problems. Also, it might be possible to obtain medical insurance for your child through the father's employer, union, or military service.

SECURITY: Fathers who support their children when they are young are more likely to continue to pay support until they become adults. If you wait, the father may decide to deny paternity which could make your child feel unwanted or unloved.

SURVIVOR'S BENEFITS*: If the father dies, your child could qualify for a number of benefits, including Social Security, pensions, inheritance rights, veterans benefits, and life insurance.

How is paternity established?

Not all states establish paternity the same way but, in general, there are two ways in which paternity can be established:

1. If the man you name as the father of your child ***agrees*** he is the father, he will be asked to sign an official form stating he is the father. In many hospitals and clinics, these forms are available to parents immediately following the birth of their child. This form will be used by a judge or a hearing officer to legally establish paternity. In many states, you do not have to appear in court to establish your child's paternity.

2. If the man you name as the father of your child ***denies*** being the father, or if you are unsure of who the father is, blood/genetic tests can be done.

The results? Usually a father will admit paternity when results of blood tests show he is the biological father of a child. If the father continues to believe he is not the father, he is entitled to a court hearing on the matter. At the hearing, a judge listens to both sides and looks at the test results.

What happens after paternity has been established?

You may seek financial support for your child in order to help pay for necessary living expenses. Under the law, your child is entitled to this support.

The ***amount*** of your monthly child support payment is decided by the laws of the state in which you live. Child support orders require that the father provide financial support for his child until he or she becomes 18 (or older depending upon state law).

*Unless legal paternity has been established, your child may not be able to claim these benefits from his or her father.

From One Mother to Another

Raising a child today is not an easy task, even under the best of circumstances. I am here to tell you it is even more difficult if you are an unwed mother. But it can be manageable if the father of your child legally establishes paternity and provides you with the financial assistance you need.

I used to assure concerned friends and family that my situation was different from other unwed mothers because my boyfriend, "Paul," and I were in a loving relationship. He was even going to be with me in the delivery room for the birth of our baby! Yet six weeks after our daughter was born, our relationship broke down. Paul simply wasn't ready for the emotional and physical demands of caring for a newborn, much less marriage.

Like many unwed mothers, I believed I would be able to afford and raise my child alone. But it didn't take long to realize I couldn't manage financially. My daughter was ill during her first months and medical bills rolled in. Her day care costs nearly equaled my monthly rent!

But what finally prompted me to seek services through the State Child Support Enforcement Agency was seeing a copy of my daughter's birth certificate. I assumed it would name Paul as the father since he had been with me in the delivery room. I was shocked to see, on the "name of the father" line, a row full of XXX's! That's when I realized my daughter deserved much more in life. She was entitled to her father's name on her birth certificate as well as his financial support.

Soon after, I signed up for child support services. Within 10 months, paternity was legally established and a child support order was issued. I am now receiving child support payments on a monthly basis. The legal and financial matters are resolved and Paul has since decided he wants a relationship with his daughter. Today my daughter is benefiting from both the financial and emotional support she receives from her father.

From one mother to another, I urge you to think of your child's needs first. Please consider the importance of having your child's paternity established and the benefits of child support services. Every child deserves a father. Every child deserves to be well cared for. And, every child deserves the love of both parents.

-- From A Mother Who's Been There

How long after a child is born can paternity be established?

Federal law requires states to allow a paternity action to be started anytime before the child reaches the age of 18 or later depending upon state law.

What if the father is unemployed or in school?

Regardless of the father's current situation, his legal responsibility should be established as quickly as possible following your child's birth. His support level (monthly payments) is based on his income level. When the father gets a job, collecting child support will be easier if paternity is already established.

Can paternity be established even if the father lives in another state?

Yes, paternity can be established if the father of your child lives out of state, but it may take more time.

Does my child's father have a right to visitation?

Visitation can often be the first step in a healthy relationship between your child and his or her father, although visitation rights are not automatic with the establishment of paternity.

Visitation terms can be arranged informally between you and the father or set by the court. If there is a disagreement, the court would have to settle this matter.

IMPORTANT: Child support services are available — for free or for a small fee -- through your local child support enforcement agency (address and telephone number noted on the back of this brochure). However, you have the option of hiring a private attorney.

Child support services include locating the father, establishing paternity, obtaining a support order, and collecting child support payments.

Why A Father Should Support His Child . . .

- *Establishing paternity is the right thing to do! Every father who brings a child into the world should accept his fair share of the financial, legal, and emotional responsibility.*

- *A father can experience the reward of contributing to the growth and development of another human being — his child.*

- *A father can enjoy a relationship with his child. Through active involvement, the father is often seen by the child as a provider, a role model, and a friend who promotes mutual love and respect.*

Your Child Support Enforcement Office:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement
370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW
Washington, DC 20447

January 1993

COLLECTING CHILD SUPPORT

The Child Support Enforcement (CSE) Program is a Federal/State/local effort to find absent parents, their employers and/or assets; **establish paternity** if necessary; and **establish** and **enforce child support orders**.

At the Federal level, the Office of Child Support Enforcement writes policies, makes sure that State CSE programs meet the requirements of Federal law, pays much of the cost of operating the program, and works with other Federal agencies that provide services to the CSE program.

State and local CSE offices run the program. Your CSE office can tell you how to apply for child support services and what papers (birth certificates, bank or tax statements, etc.) you should bring. In most States, CSE offices are in the human services agency. Check the telephone book for the number of your local CSE office. State CSE Agencies are listed at the end of this brochure; they, too, can give you the telephone number for your local CSE office.

Locating a Non-Custodial Parent

To establish and enforce a child support order, and to get a ruling about who the father is, if necessary, the CSE office needs to know where the non-custodial parent is.

When a parent has disappeared, the CSE office can usually find him/her with the help of State offices, such as the Department of Motor Vehicles, or with the help of the Federal Parent Locator Service. Your caseworker can tell you what information the CSE office needs to find an absent parent or his/her employer.

Establishing Paternity

If a baby's parents are not married, it is necessary to establish paternity--determine who is the legal father. Many fathers sign paternity papers willingly. Either parent can request a blood test to be sure that a man is the father of the baby. Your caseworker can help you to establish paternity for your child.

Establishing the Obligation

The fair amount of child support that a parent should pay is decided by using child support guidelines. Your CSE office will be able to tell you about guidelines in your State. The needs of the child, the number of children who must be supported, and the ability of the parents to pay all are taken into consideration. Your CSE office can also request health insurance coverage for your child.

Enforcing the Child Support Order

The CSE office can help collect child support no matter where the non-custodial parent may live in the United States, or even in some foreign countries.

The best way to collect child support is by taking it out of the parent's paycheck just like income tax withholding. Most child support orders require the employer to withhold money that is ordered for child support and send it to the CSE office. Your CSE office can tell you how this works.

State and Federal Income Tax refunds may be used to collect unpaid child support. State laws may allow: liens on real and personal property; orders to withhold and deliver property; or seizure and sale of property, with the proceeds going to pay the child support debt. States must be able to report child support debts to credit bureaus. Parents are bringing their child support payments up-to-date so that their ability to obtain credit won't be impaired.

STATE CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT OFFICES

State	TOLL-FREE NUMBER	CSE OFFICE
Alabama	1-800-762-8903	(205) 242-9300
Alaska	1-800-478-3300	(907) 276-3441
Arizona	1-800-543-7383	(602) 252-0236
Arkansas	1-800-264-2445	(501) 682-8398
California	1-800-952-5253	(916) 654-1556
Colorado	. . .	(303) 866-5998
Connecticut	1-800-228-KIDS	(203) 566-3053
Delaware	. . .	(302) 421-8300
DC	(city only) 879-4839	(202) 724-5610
Florida	1-800-622-KIDS	(904) 488-9900
Georgia	1-800-227-7993	(404) 894-4119
Guam	. . .	(671) 475-3319
Hawaii	1-800-468-4644	(808) 587-3712
Idaho	1-800-356-9868	(208) 334-5710
Illinois	1-800-447-4278	(217) 782-1366
Indiana	. . .	(317) 232-4894
Iowa	. . .	(515) 281-5580
Kansas	. . .	(913) 296-3237
Kentucky	1-800-248-1168	(502) 564-2285
Louisiana	. . .	(504) 342-4780
Maine	1-800-371-3101	(207) 289-2886
Maryland	1-800-638-3912	(410) 333-3979
Massachusetts	1-800-332-2733	(617) 621-4200
Michigan	. . .	(517) 373-7570
Minnesota	. . .	(612) 296-2499
Mississippi	1-800-562-2959	(601) 354-0341
Missouri	1-800-859-7999	(314) 751-4301
Montana	1-800-346-5437	(406) 444-4614
Nebraska	1-800-831-4573	(402) 471-9125
Nevada	1-800-992-0900	(702) 885-4744
New Hampshire	1-800-852-3345 (X4427)	(603) 271-4426
New Jersey	1-800-621-5432	(609) 588-2361
New Mexico	1-800-432-6217	(505) 827-7200
New York	1-800-342-3012	(518) 474-9081
North Carolina	1-800-662-7030	(919) 571-4120
North Dakota	. . .	(701) 224-3582
Ohio	1-800-686-1556	(614) 752-6561
Oklahoma	1-800-522-2922	(405) 424-5871
Oregon	. . .	(503) 378-5439
Pennsylvania	1-800-932-0211	(717) 787-3672
Puerto Rico	. . .	(809) 722-4731
Rhode Island	1-800-922-0536	(401) 277-2409
South Carolina	. . .	(803) 737-5870
South Dakota	. . .	(605) 773-3641
Tennessee	1-800-874-0530	(615) 741-1820
Texas	1-800-252-3515	(512) 463-2181
Utah	1-800-257-9156	(801) 538-4400
Vermont	1-800-622-4129	(802) 241-2319
Virgin Islands	. . .	(809) 774-5666
Virginia	1-800-662-1969	(804) 662-9629
Washington	1-800-442-KIDS	(206) 586-3162
West Virginia	1-800-634-4419	(304) 348-3780
Wisconsin	. . .	(608) 266-1175
Wyoming	1-800-457-3659	(307) 777-7892

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Collecting Child Support

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